ANACOSTIA METRO STATION JOINT DEVELOPMENT SITE

URBAN DESIGN CONSIDERATIONS

DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA OFFICE OF PLANNING
SEPTEMBER 2004

Overview

The Anacostia neighborhood on the east bank of the Anacostia River is one of the District's emerging neighborhoods presenting tremendous opportunity for investment and redevelopment. With ever increasing demand for transit accessible residential, retail, and commercial opportunities within the urban core, the Anacostia Metro Station Joint Development Site offers a valuable opportunity.

The Anacostia Metro site is the nexus linking the subway, the Anacostia main street, surrounding neighborhoods and the Anacostia waterfront. It is a unique convergence of metrorail, metrobus, light rail transit, bike and pedestrian trails and major auto commuter corridors unmatched in the region.

Exceptional urban and architectural design will be critical for the site to meet its full potential and catalyze additional resurgence in the local neighborhood and along the Anacostia river. This document provides developers and evaluators with design considerations intended to maximize the opportunity of this site and create a vibrant anchor of activity around the Anacostia Metro Station.

Planning Objectives for the Site

The Metro Joint Development Site consists of two parcels flanking Howard Road. To the southeast is a 4-acre site bounded by Howard Road, Firth Sterling Avenue, Suitland Parkway, and the boundary of the United House of Prayer. Across Howard Road is the 0.8-acre second parcel, bounded by Firth Sterling Avenue, Shannon Place, and the property boundary of the Revival Temple.

Two recently completed planning documents address the role of the site in the urban context. In the Poplar Point Target Area Plan of the Anacostia Waterfront Initiative, Howard Road anchors the waterfront to the existing neighborhood and establishes a strong pedestrian connection. Suitland Parkway, in contrast, continues the parkway greenery and landscape all the way to the waterfront park.

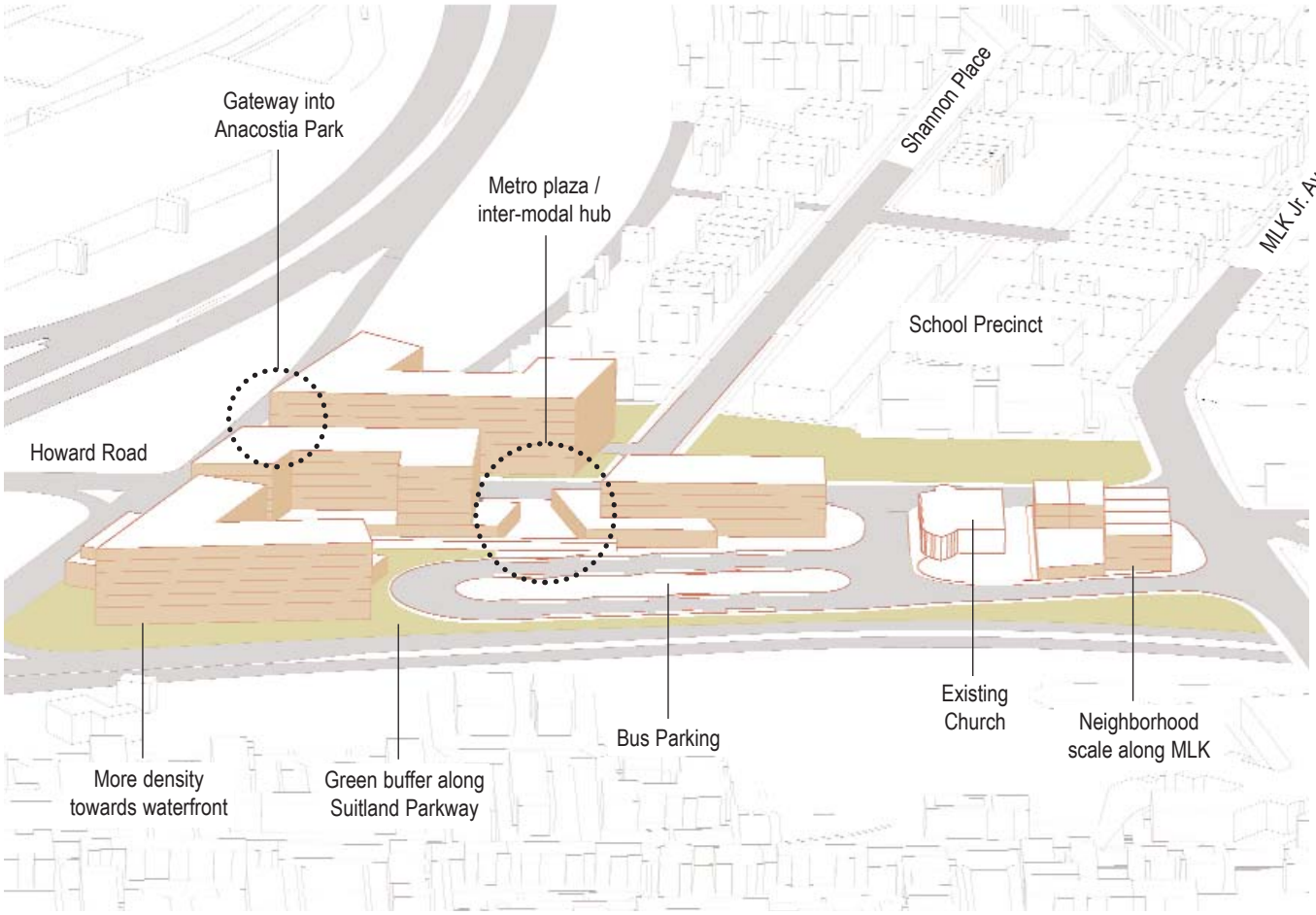
The Anacostia Transit Area Plan calls to reconnect the Metro to the historic main street, the neighborhood and the waterfront. As the point of convergence of multiple modes of transport, the site is a major gateway into Anacostia. It must clearly articulate a sense of identity for the community. An attractive public realm, clear inter-modal connections, public art, and a mix of uses are essential. Public spaces must be designed to strengthen the sense of place and facilitate the use and connectivity of public transit modes.

Site Opportunity

The Anacostia Metro Joint Development Site, an intermodal center bringing together bus, bike, trolley, subway, pedestrians and autos, presents a key opportunity within the Anacostia neighborhood and waterfront. Massing studies have determined that the site can accommodate greater than 250 residential units and over 20,000 sf of retail development. Market studies indicate that there is significant unmet market demand that would easily absorb this development.

Housing presents the greatest opportunity for the site. Planning objectives recommend this site provide significant new residential units at a range of income levels for a diversity of household types. The site also presents a tremendous opportunity to expand existing retail services. Ground floor retail, dining establishments, and/or cultural uses will contribute to a vibrant pedestrian environment, increase the convenience of transit, and enhance neighborhood livability. A new grocery store is a desirable possibility.

Public realm character is critically important for this site. The site is highly visible from the neighborhood, waterfront, and Suitland Parkway. Development should provide an inviting, pedestrian-oriented setting that conveys the character of the local neighborhood and provides a sensitive and attractive gateway to the Anacostia waterfront



Concept design and massing for the Anacostia Metro Station Joint Development Site

URBAN DESIGN PRINCIPLES

In order to meet planning objectives and maximize the opportunity of the site, the following urban design principles outline specific approaches that address site design and orientation; height and massing; ground floor facades and street level environment; connectivity and circulation; parking and loading; public spaces; architecture and materials; and sustainable development.

- Take **advantage of transit** by optimizing development density with appropriate height and sensitive massing.
- **Serve the pedestrian** with adequate sidewalks, active ground floors, and inviting pedestrian amenities.
- **Create a distinctive place** through public art, cohesive streetscapes, and landscaping.
- Provide **clear and logical connections** to integrate transit, bike, pedestrian, and auto access between modes and destinations
- Define **places for vehicles** that accommodate development needs and support pedestrians.
- Emphasize **high quality architecture** that complements the historic context and demonstrates principles of sustainable design.

As illustrated in the example above, transit-oriented urban design embodies best practices such as pedestrian safety, transit integration, street level activity, transparent facades, wide sidewalks, minimum setbacks, and mixed use character

Use balconies and projections to articulate surfaces

Break down the scale of buildings through variation in massing and material

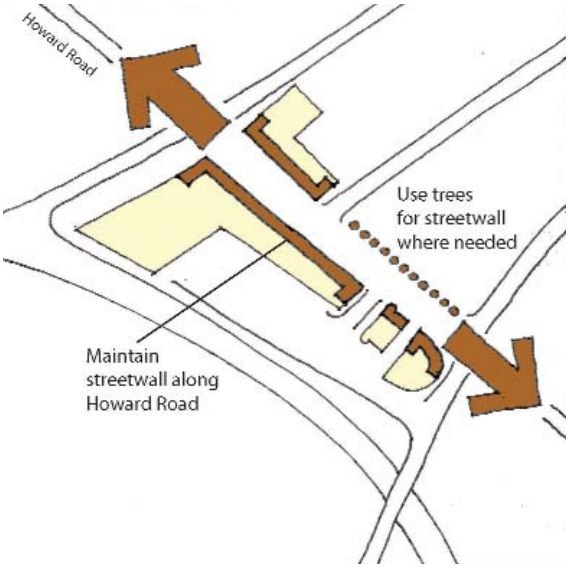
Taking Advantage of Transit: Height, Massing, & Site Plan

Design Objective

The Anacostia Metro Site provides a unique opportunity for significant new mixed-income housing and additional retail uses in close proximity to transit. Building heights and massing should take advantage of site context to accommodate relatively greater heights that buffer the neighborhood from freeway, rail corridor and adjacent uses. The site plan should appropriately address the approach to the waterfront via Suitland Parkway, connections to Main Street Anacostia via Martin Luther King Jr. Avenue, and critical pedestrian corridors along Howard Road and Firth Sterling Avenue.

Considerations

Incorporate a mix of uses into site development. Consider retail uses on the ground floor with upper floor residential uses. It is strongly recommended that residential units be available to a range of income levels.



Consider locating greater heights toward rail corridor to buffer neighborhood and take advantage of waterfront views. Step down heights toward neighborhood main street and Suitland Parkway.

Larger buildings should have a clearly articulated base, middle, and top.

Create a continuous street wall along Howard Road. Orient building frontages, building entrances, and retail storefronts onto the main streets of Howard Road and Firth Sterling Avenue.

Break down building mass with shadow lines, projections, and recesses, especially on the upper floors. Use variation in building height, partial step backs, building breaks, variation in material and texture, and upper level terraces to increase visual interest.

Promote medium to high density uses close to transit

Explore opportunities to improve intermodal connections and the public environment. Explore redesign of bus facility to create multi-use public space or plaza. Enhance visual and physical connections between modes.

Explore site designs that create clear public pedestrian pathways to and through the site linking bus, light rail, bike, and subway facilities to main streets, waterfront, and the surrounding neighborhoods.

Provide a landscaped buffer along Suitland Parkway to the waterfront that screens the development site and provides a landscaped visual setting for the progression to the river.

Serving the Pedestrian: Ground Floor Treatment & Facades

Design Objective

Every transit rider is a pedestrian, as is every retail customer. The urban design of the Metro station site development should promote a positive pedestrian experience that is inviting, safe, and interesting. The site should be designed to provide strong street edges, an active and animated public realm, and a cohesive local streetscape.

Considerations

Building facades should create a continuous and active streetwall. 70% of site façade along Howard Road should be built to the sidewalk edge with no setback. The remaining 30% may be recessed to accommodate entryways or be left open for public plazas or entries.

Frontage along Firth Sterling should consider a maximum 10' buffer planting between rail right-of-way and building façade. Frontage should provide at least one through connection from Firth Sterling for direct access between LRT, bus and Metro.

Ground floor uses along Howard Road are strongly encouraged to include retail or active arts or cultural uses. A modest grocery tenant would be welcome. Explore opportunities for cafes and small restaurants with outdoor sidewalk seating.

Ground floors along Firth Sterling should be relatively transparent with residential entrances and common areas visible through glazed window openings.

Ground floor facades for retail should be a minimum of 70% transparent, low reflective glass. Ground floor heights should be a minimum of 15' with entrances no more than 40' apart.

Avoid long monolithic facades along pedestrian corridors by breaking up horizontal building mass with variations in material textures, setbacks or projections. Limit building length without articulation to 25'.

Encourage up to 70% of ground floor transparency

Serving the Pedestrian: Street Environment

Design Objective

Every transit rider is a pedestrian at some point - as is every retail customer. Therefore the urban design of the metro station site development should promote a positive pedestrian experience that is inviting, safe, and interesting.The site should be designed to provide strong street edges, an active and animated public realm, and a cohesive local streetscape.

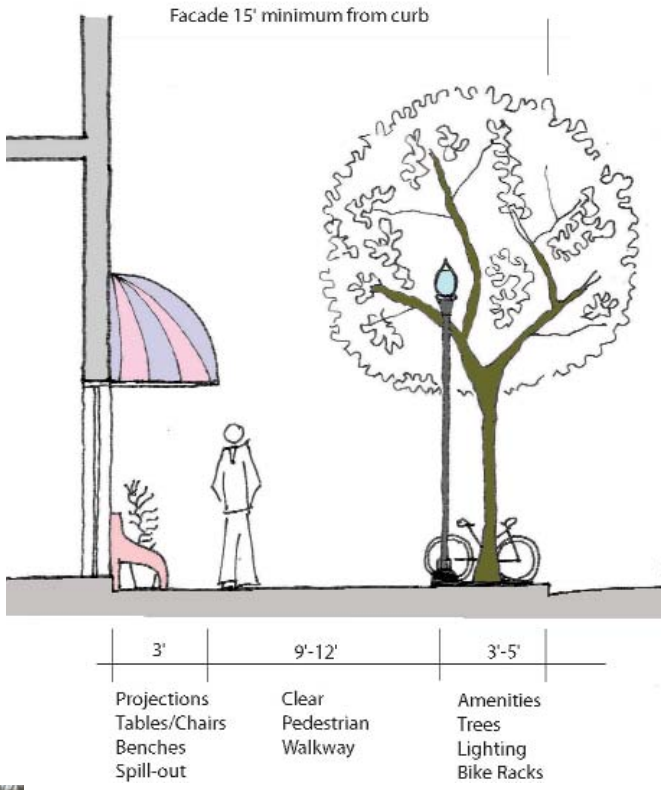
Considerations

Maintain a minimum and consistent 15' sidewalk along Howard Road and Firth Sterling. Street furniture should respect a 10' wide unobstructed sidewalk for clear pedestrian flow.

Provide adequate space for street trees - preferably in a planting strip that provides space for strong, healthy growth.

Explore opportunities to illuminate interior display areas. Allow storefront lighting to also illuminate the public sidewalk creating a more inviting nighttime environment.

Provide pedestrian streetscape amenities such as seating (benches or narrow perches for leaning), awnings, trees or other plantings for shade, directional signage, bike racks, trash cans, bike racks etc.



Promote uses and design that activate the street

If security gates are necessary for retail storefronts, mount them into the interior ceiling of the display window. If utilized, it is strongly preferred that security grates be open wire-mesh rather than solid with a minimum of 70% transparency.

Animate ground floors with design features and amenities such as awnings, shop windows, entries, sidewalk displays, benches, café tables etc. Projections into the sidewalk should be limited to 3' from the face of the building at least 8' above sidewalk level.

Minimize curb cuts on Howard Road to increase pedestrian safety and street continuity.

Making Places: Public Realm and Place Making

Design Objective

The Metro site is in many ways the "front door" of the Anacostia neighborhood and provides the first impression of the neighborhood. The Metro site is also a magnet and gathering place for transit riders, shoppers, residents, workers, and visitors. The site should establish an immediate positive image and celebrate local identity. It should provide well-designed and accessible public as well as semi-public open space.

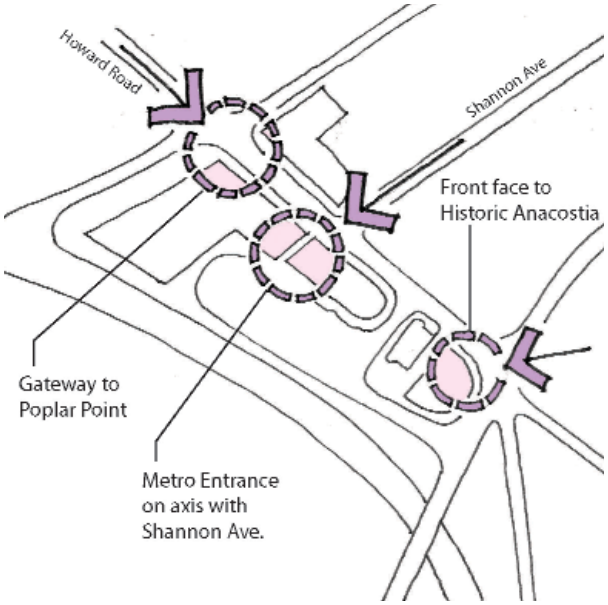
Considerations

Explore possibilities for redesign and landscaping of bus transfer facility as efficient, inviting, multi-use space. Consider amenities needed to promote bus ridership and comfort. Invest in durable and attractive paving material and fixtures.

Explore opportunities to articulate key focal points such as the termination of Shannon Place, metro entrance site line from Martin Luther King Jr. Avenue, and pedestrian connection to Anacostia Waterfront.

Architectural treatment at the corner of Firth Sterling and Howard Road (on both sides of the street) should project a distinct identity as the entry into Anacostia Park. Do not build a formal "gateway" to the project.

Public spaces should have clear visibility from Howard Road and other pedestrian corridors.



Articulate key focal points through design

Explore opportunities to utilize non-traditional spaces such as parking podium roofs to provide private outdoor space above street level.

Explore opportunities to incorporate public art that reflects local neighborhood character and identity, particularly along primary pedestrian pathways. Consider bus shelters, paving, lighting, etc.

Create semi-private open space for residents. Balconies and rooftop gardens are encouraged. Avoid private open spaces at street level or as gated enclaves.

Include design of appropriate open space and sidewalks along Howard Road in overall public realm considerations. Ensure a cohesive public realm character linking the main street and waterfront areas.

Clear Connections: Inter-modal Connectivity

Design Objective

The Anacostia Metro site is the convergence of a number of transportation modes including bus, subway, light rail, pedestrians, bicyclists, and autos. Connections between these modes should be easy and logical and used as an opportunity to showcase quality urban design.

Considerations

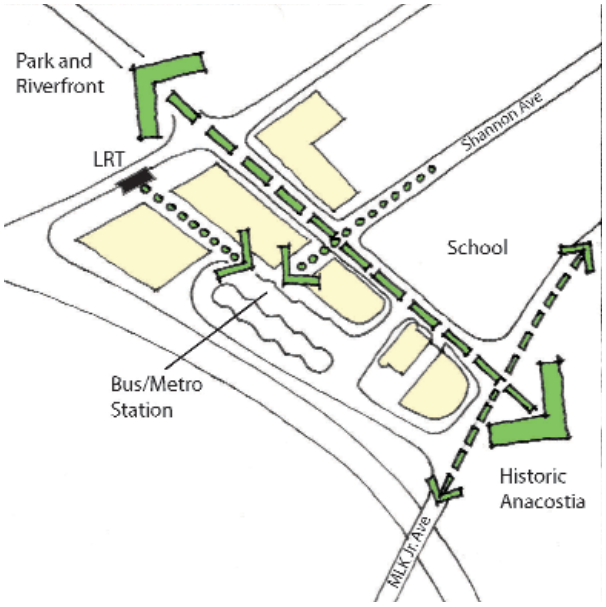
Explore strategies to maintain or enhance visual and physical connections between transit modes. Transit stations should be clearly visible from Howard Road and, as possible, from Martin Luther King Jr. Avenue.

Accommodate city bike routes and allow them to connect via Howard Road. Primary routes in the vicinity include the Anacostia Trail, the Suitland Parkway Trail, MLK Jr. Ave, and Howard Road.

Explore opportunities to incorporate bike rental and storage facilities in proximity to the Metro entry plaza.

Design site and buildings to promote visual and pedestrian connections to surrounding destinations including Martin Luther King Jr. Ave., area schools, and Anacostia Park/Poplar Point.

Consider way-finding signage to orient pedestrians arriving at intermodal station to area destinations and services.



Encourage pedestrian and bike connectivity between modes; consider through-site connections as shown

Provide connections between LRT, buses,and Metro

Promote walking and biking

Places for Vehicles: Parking and Service

Design Objectives

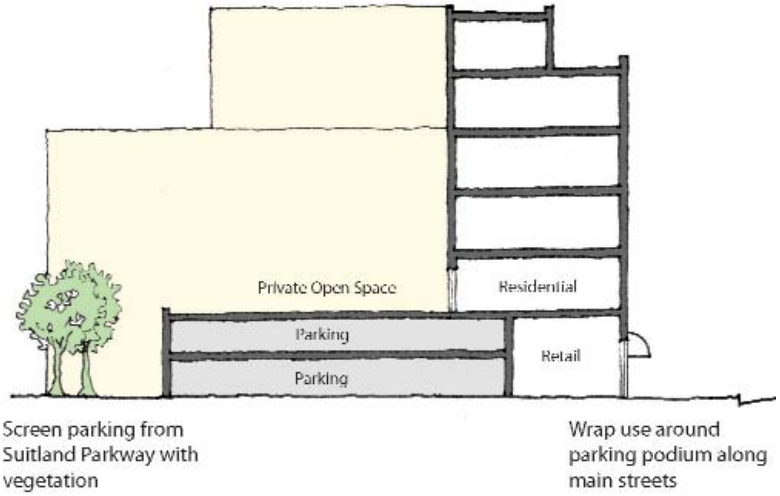
Adequate parking and efficient service is essential for a successful development project. Provide all required parking within the site in lots or structures that are screened from public view. Provide minimum parking keeping in mind that this is a transit-oriented neighborhood with excellent multi-modal transit access.

Considerations

On-site parking should be convenient and efficient, but hidden from view. Ideally parking should be located above, below or behind ground floor uses. Minimize surface parking.

Above-grade parking should be located in the interior of the block without exposure to Howard Road. Any exposure along Suitland should be screened by landscaping.

Minimize vehicular curb-cuts on Howard Road to avoid disruption to pedestrian circulation and streetwall.



Minimize conflicts between pedestrian and autos. Avoid parking access and curb cuts on major pedestrian corridors.

Minimize the impact of vehicles and vehicular infrastructure on the pedestrian experience a around the site. Provide efficient service and parking areas that are easily accessible but screened from public view by landscape or built use.

Consider strategies to minimize parking on site to no more than 1 space per residential unit and 3 spaces/1000 sf retail. Explore opportunities to incorporate a car share program and inducements for residents, workers or shoppers to use transit such as commuter check programs, transit pass center, and convenient bike rental and storage facilities. Explore shared parking opportunities.

Consider separating garage entry and exit points to minimize width of curb cuts.

Sustainable Design: Quality Architecture, Materials, & Green Building

Design Objectives

Architectural design of the Metro site should complement historic character of the Anacostia district while at the same time adopt the highest standards of innovative contemporary architecture. As a waterfront location, it should also demonstrate environmental stewardship by including sensitive landscaping, innovative stormwater management, and green building principles. High quality and durable materials should be used to enhance neighborhood character.

Considerations

Utilize high quality materials in construction such as brick, stone, terracotta tile, wood, ornamental metal, glass, and stained concrete. Avoid dryvit, aluminum siding or mirrored glass.

Architecture should complement historic character. Innovative and contemporary approaches are encouraged.

Use fenestration to articulate building mass and avoid a perception of bulk. Ideally at least 70% of ground floors and 50% of upper floors should be glazed, particularly along the Howard Road frontage.

Explore opportunities for green roofs and rain gardens. Consider LEED certification.

Utilize high quality, durable materials to add architectural variety and interest.

Development projects are strongly encouraged to utilize LEED rating system in building design, materials, and construction management.

Consider strategies to incorporate low-impact development into building and site plan. Development plan should follow Best Management Practices for stormwater management, collection, and use. Explore opportunities for green roofs or rain gardens as resident or community amenities.

Design site to minimize impervious surfaces and heat island effect.